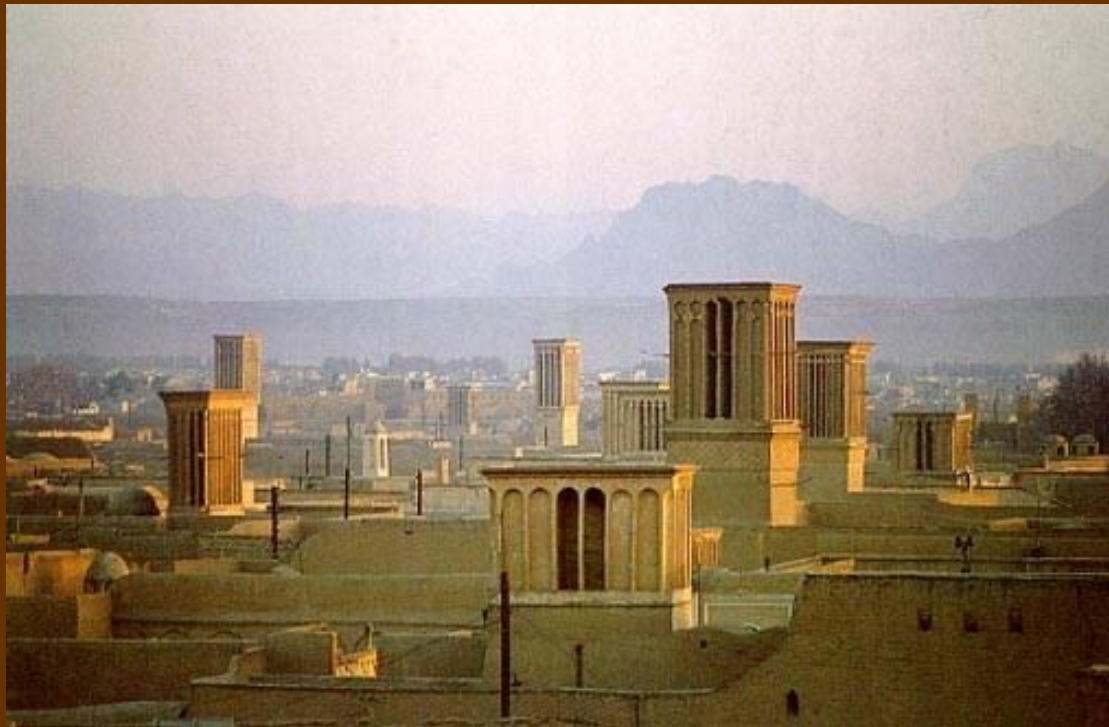


A Journey to Iran



Prepared for
Steppes Travel Clients
13 days

QUICK REFERENCE ITINERARY

Day 1	Fly London Heathrow / Tehran (overnight)
Day 2	Arrive Tehran
Day 3	Drive Tehran / Kashan / Isfahan
Day 4	Isfahan
Day 5	Isfahan
Day 6	Drive Isfahan / Na'in
Day 7	Drive Na'in / Yazd
Day 8	Yazd
Day 9	Drive Yazd / Kerman
Day 10	Drive Kerman / Shiraz
Day 11	Shiraz
Day 12	Fly Shiraz / Tehran
Day 13	Fly Tehran / London Heathrow

YOUR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Day	Route	Flt No.	Check in	Depart	Arrive
Day 1	London Heathrow Term 1 /Tehran	BD 931	17:00	19:00	04:25*
Day 13	Tehran / London Heathrow Term 1	BD 932	06:55	06:30	09:35

* Arrival the following day

DETAILED TRIP ITINERARY

Day 1

This evening depart London Heathrow on the British Midland BMI flight to Tehran, flying overnight.

Day 2



Following your arrival in Tehran you will be met and transferred to your hotel. The remainder of the morning is at leisure.

In the afternoon begin your sightseeing programme with a visit to the National Museum. It preserves ancient Persian antiquities including pottery vessels, metal objects, books, coins etc. It was inaugurated in 1937. The museum consists of two buildings. Building One is dedicated to the pre-Islamic collection, while Building Two contains post-Islamic artifacts. Tehran became the national capital in the 18th century, and it is the leader in almost every field of Iranian life and today you will begin to see why.

Overnight at the 4 Ferdowsi Hotel or 5* Laleh Hotel (Breakfast).*

Day 3

After breakfast you leave Tehran for Isfahan. En route stop to see the attractive oasis town of Kashan which was in the past famous for its carpets, ceramic tiles and silk. Shah Abbas I is buried here in a mausoleum of a 13th C ancestor. Here too, as in Yazd, there are many wind towers to help keep the temperatures down in the hot summer months. Visit the Fin Garden famous not only for its beautiful design as a "natural garden" but also for a bath in the garden called "Fin Bath" in which the famous great Iranian Chancellor "Amir Kabir" was assassinated by the order of Nasser-al-din Shah of Qajar dynasty. Other important buildings are the Seljuq and Timurid Masjed-e-Jame, with its 11th C Mehrab.

On arrival in Isfahan check in to your hotel.

Overnight at the 4 Ali Qapu Hotel or to the 5* Abbasi Hotel (Breakfast).*

Day 4



Isfahan is one of only 10 cities worldwide protected by the UN for its universal heritage. Of long-standing importance as a trading centre, Isfahan came to its peak during the reign of Shah Abbas I (1587-1629), who united the country, and left Isfahan as his glorious legacy. Described by scholars and poets alike as 'the most beautiful city in the world', it boasts the most dramatic square you will ever see, surrounded by palaces and mosques.

Begin your sightseeing programme mid-morning. Visits today could include the outstanding Masfid-i-Shah mosque, Vank Church (Armenian Christians), Djame Mosque and the grandeur of the Ali Qapu Palace, Chehelsotun Palace and the Hasht Behesht Palace. These are offset by the gardens and famous bazaars of this warm and vibrant Islamic and Christian city. Two magnificent bridges span the river each with teahouses under their arches where people sit in huddles and the men smoke hubba bubbas. At night they are floodlit which adds to their architectural elegance.

Overnight at the 4 Ali Qapu Hotel or to the 5* Abbasi Hotel (Breakfast).*

Day 5

A further day will be spent sightseeing in the city visiting sites you did not see on the previous day.

Overnight at the 4 Ali Qapu Hotel or to the 5* Abbasi Hotel (Breakfast).*

Day 6

The morning is at leisure. After lunch depart Isfahan for the small town of Na'in. On arrival check in to your hotel.

Overnight at the 2 Narges Hotel or 2* Tourist Inn (Breakfast).*

Day 7

Spend the morning sightseeing in Na'in. Na'in is the geographical centre of Iran. It is famous for carpet making and for its Friday Mosque, which dates from the early Islamic period. Some features date back to the 10th century. In addition, other very interesting visits include the pit weavers (who make the garments for the clergy) and an ethnographic museum converted from a merchant's house. Continue in the afternoon to Yazd.

Overnight at the 3 Dad Hotel or 3* Laleh Golshan Hotel, 4* Baghe Moshir Garden or 4* Safaieh Hotel (Breakfast).*

Day 8



Yazd is an oasis town surrounded by mountains, its roofscape a plethora of blue domes, soaring minarets and hundreds of wind towers.

Most of the day will be spent walking in the town although there will be a visit to the 'Towers of Silence', pits where the bodies of the dead were left for the vultures as the Zorostrians do not believe in burial. The old town of Yazd is a labyrinth of secret passages, bazaars and mud brick streets, unchanged for centuries. It was, and still is, an important centre for Zoroastrinism and a fire temple can often be visited. The shrine of Duvazdah Imam, (the 12 Imams) from the 11th century Seljuq period may also be seen.

Overnight at the 3 Dad Hotel or 3* Laleh Golshan Hotel, 4* Baghe Moshir Garden or 4* Safaieh Hotel (Breakfast).*

Day 9

This morning continue by car to Kerman, a journey of about 4 hours. Kerman is a desert city of mosques. Founded in the 3rd century AD by Ardashir I, founder of the Sassanian dynasty, it has a long and turbulent history. The local Persian dialect is spoken with something approaching an Indian accent.

After lunch travel a to Mahan to visit the restful Shahzadeh Garden (a late 19th century Qajar-period garden/house) and Shahnem-atollah Vali Shrine (a well known Sufi Dervish from the 14th century) are visited. The tiered rose gardens have a central waterway that cascades down to the front gate.

Returning to Kerman, and if time allows, see some of the city's sites including the Friday Mosque, notable for its four lofty eivans and shimmering blue tiles. Behind the mosque is a small spice bazaar and market. The Regent Bazaar is one of the most interesting after the one in Isfahan. It was once a caravanserai

with a vaulted brick ceiling of many different designs. There are two converted bathhouses within the complex, one is now an elegant teahouse and the other a museum showing what a traditional bathhouse looked like.

Overnight at the 3 Tourist Inn or 3* Akhavan Hotel or 5* Pars Hotel (Breakfast).*

Day 10

This morning depart for the full day drive to Shiraz. On arrival check in to your hotel.

Overnight at the 3 Parsian Hotel or 3* Ario-Barzan Hotel or the 5* Homa Hotel (Breakfast).*

Day 11

The morning is at leisure. Shiraz was said to rival Baghdad in commerce, art and culture. Its wonderful setting and influx of scholars and artists put the town at the pinnacle of the Islamic world in the 13th and 14th centuries. Later, during the 18th century Zand dynasty, it was to become the capital of Iran. It is by tradition the city of roses and nightingales, of famous poets and beautiful gardens and it is these that you will visit. Begin your sightseeing this afternoon.

Overnight at the 3 Parsian Hotel or 3* Ario-Barzan Hotel or the 5* Homa Hotel (Breakfast).*

Day 12



You will have a further full day of sightseeing today which will include an excursion to Persepolis and the surrounding sites. Persepolis today vies with Ephesus and Classical Greece in the importance of its remains. Founded by Darius 1 in 512 BC, it was once surrounded by walls 18 metres high, it ruled over the largest empire the world had yet seen. Today it boasts impressive ruins of a cosmopolitan nature, including original palaces, carvings and massive bas-reliefs from the Sassanian period. The city was partly destroyed by Alexander the Great in 331 BC. 4 km away at Naghe-e Rostam the rock-cut tombs of the kings Xerxes 1 and Darius 1 and II are to be found above pictures of investitures and conquests.

Later this afternoon you will be transferred to the airport for the flight to Tehran (IR324 18:35-20:00). On arrival you will be met and taken to your hotel.

Overnight at the 4 Ferdowsi Hotel or 5* Laleh Hotel (Breakfast).*

Day 13

This morning you will be collected from your hotel and taken to the airport for the British Midland BMI flight to London Heathrow, arriving in London later the same morning.

OR

Add a day in Shiraz (Firuzabad)

Another day will be spent away from Shiraz. You will make a trip to Firuzabad, 110 km to the south. It is thought that Ardeshir I built three sites in the area and you will visit two of them today. Near Firuzabad is the site of a fortified palace, Qaleh-I-Dokhtar. If operating you can take a chairlift up to the ruin. Built on a high bluff, which overlooks the river and roadway running south from Fars the entrance to the castle is through a tall gateway in a large, rectangular tower. Inside this

a broad stairway leads up to a rectangular hall, with blind niches on both sides and two large buttresses at the east end. These supported stairways up to the next level, another large rectangular room, 14 x 23 m, with an arched recess, an *iwan*, at the east end and arched blind windows on either side. It was presumably roofed by an arched vault. Beyond this there are steps to a third level and a large rectangular room with $\frac{1}{4}$ circle squinches at each corner supporting a domed roof. This was buttressed by very thick walls on all sides, presumably to ensure its stability, and the cupola could be reached by a spiral staircase on the south side. Not far from Qaleh-I-Dokhtar is what is thought to be Ardeshir's Palace with the remains of fire temple beside it. It is notable for being perhaps one of the earliest examples of the squinch (what the dome rest on) and the *iwan*.

Overnight at the 3 Parsian Hotel or 3* Ario-Barzan Hotel or the 5* Homa Hotel (Breakfast).*

OR

**Add a day in Kerman
(Kaluts, Shahdad)**

After breakfast depart for a full days sightseeing to Shahdad and surrounding sites and Kaluts. The area is fascinating with many unusual features. Shahdad is located in one of Iran's famous deserts, Kavir-e Lut and is 100 km from Kerman. The temperature here can reach a high 100 Celsius. The desert plants of the area sometimes reach as high as 10m. What makes Shahdad even more unique is its location at the foot of the region's highest mountains, the peaks of which are covered with snow until May. The area also enjoys near permanent water allowing citrus and date orchards to flourish.

The mythical city of Kaluts, 40 km from Shahdad, was formed due to water and wind erosion some 20,000 years ago.

Overnight at the 3 Tourist Inn or 3* Akhavan Hotel or 5* Pars Hotel (Breakfast).*

**Add a day in Kerman
(Rayen)**

Today depart for a full day excursion to the village of Rayen, to visit the Arg, or Citadel of Rayen, a miniature version of the Arg-e-Bam, with all the architectural features of a desert citadel, which is now on the map as a result of the tragic earthquake in Bam which destroyed the town and its magnificent citadel; on the return journey stop at Mahan, to visit the blue-tiled Mausoleum of Shah Nematollah-e-Vali, the great 14th century Sufi Leader; and the Shahzadeh Garden (a late 19th century Qajar-period garden/house). *You would not then visit Mahan on Day 14 if you opt for this additional day.*

Overnight at the 3 Tourist Inn or 3* Akhavan Hotel or 5* Pars Hotel (Breakfast).*

TRIP PRICE

Estimated Price: £3685.00 per person based on two people sharing twin/double room (13 days) in 2/3/4* hotels
£3985 per person based on two people sharing twin/double room (13 days) in 4/5* hotels

£215.00 extra day in 2/3/4* hotels & £305 in 4/5* hotels in Shiraz to Firuzabad

£235 extra day in 2/3/4* hotels & £255 in 5* hotel in Kerman to Kaluts/Shahdad

£235.00 extra day in 2/3/4* hotels & £255 in 5* hotel in Kerman to Rayen

All prices are subject to change and subject to currency and fuel fluctuations.

Includes: International flights in Economy Class, air passenger taxes where they can be collected as part of the air tickets, accommodation in twin/double room (including early check in in Tehran), meals as indicated, sightseeing programme with entrance fees to tourist sites, driver, English speaking guide to accompany client for entire itinerary, Iranian visa support letter, transfers & transportation (air-conditioned car, internal flight in Economy Class).

Excludes: Visas, travel insurance, items of a personal nature, gratuities, camera/video fees, drinks with meals, early check in or late check out at hotels unless specified.

Notes: The best time to travel is the Spring and the Autumn.

The above itinerary is a suggestion. It can be amended. It is for private travel and you will not be part of a group.

Please note that the itinerary is subject to change without notice. Whilst Steppes Travel will do all it can to advise you in advance of any changes this is not always possible. Your patience and understanding are appreciated. At times in Iran, as might be expected, there can be delays, and things may not always be up to European standards.

The international air fares that we use are special discounted IT (inclusive tour) fares, which, whilst good value for money do carry strict booking conditions (e.g. have to be bought in conjunction with elements on the ground and are subject to certain restrictions, conditions and class availability).

Dress - Many men wear T-shirts with sleeves to the elbow but occasionally this is frowned upon and purges take place. It is therefore advised that you also take long sleeved shirts, which can be buttoned at the wrist. Women must wear Islamic dress or hejab. You do not have to wear a chador but you must wear loose fitting clothing with long sleeves and a long dark coat to at least calf-length. The head and neck must be covered with a scarf. Feet and any part of the legs still showing must be covered by thick tights or socks.

Please take a sweater, as daytime temperatures will vary in both countries. It can feel cold when out of the sun, in air-conditioned buildings and cars and at night.

Currency - Please take small denomination USD cash. Please only change as much as you need. Please discuss with your guides how best to do this and where exchange facilities exist. Credit card facilities are almost non-existent and Traveller's Cheques are difficult to change and commission charged is often high.

Optional Extras

Here are some suggestions of ways to enhance and therefore make your holiday even more special.

- Upgrade your flight from economy to premium economy or business class
- Upgrade your hotel room
- Organise a personal shopper or expert guide to show you around
- Organise a special celebration meal or unique activity or excursion
- Pre-book valet, airport parking, airport hotels and airport lounges.

If you wish to upgrade or pre-book any of the above options then please do contact us.

YOUR CONSULTANT

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